

MINISTRY OF

AGRICULTURE



ALLOTMENT &

Garden Guide

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"FEBRUARY Fill Dyke" may live up to that old country title—or it may not. We shall not be so rash as to prophesy what the weather will be, for though it may be snowing or raining in the North, the South may be basking in the sun—even if a wintry one. However, if the weather be fine in February, we shall be anxious to get on to the vegetable plot; if it is not, then we can do a bit of thinking and planning indoors. We can profitably take stock of where we stand and make sure that we are ready to start operations as soon as the weather is right and the ground fit.

Never work the soil when it is too wet and sticky and clings in lumps to your boots. You do more harm than good by walking on it and working it when it is like that. And that applies also to sowing seeds, for seeds sown in cold, wet soil will rot instead of germinating, or they will make but poor growth.

If you can settle down to do a bit of thinking and planning—and plotting things out on paper—it will be worth your while to read carefully what is said later about the



importance of crop rotation. It may save you a headache in the months ahead if you plan the lay-out of your vegetable plot. And when you do, bear in mind what you have got growing

now in the way of vegetables. If you have an abundance and a good selection—and your family eats what you grow—then you won't go far wrong if you stick to last year's plan (rotating your crops, of course). But if your wife, or whoever runs the kitchen department, complains that there is little or nothing in the

garden and that shop prices are high, it would pay you to plan so that you grow your own winter vegetables—especially greens. But before you

get down to planning, have you yet got or ordered what you will need when you can start outdoor operations? These are the items:

SEEDS ★ SEED POTATOES ★ FERTILISERS



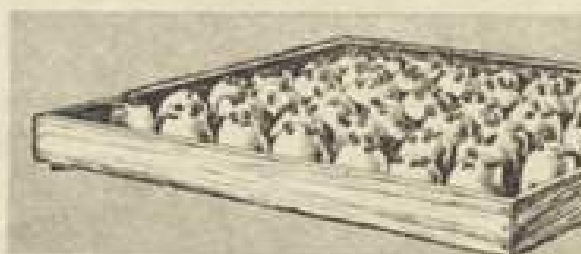
Have you got those SEEDS?

Perhaps, if the weather is suitable, you will be sowing broad beans (unless black fly has broken your heart!) and spinach in February—and planting shallots and Jerusalem artichokes (if you like them). Have you got these items or ordered them? If not, get busy. And if you have planned all you are going to grow this season, order all your requirements right away from your seedsman or nurseryman.

The value of a good strain of seed is tremendous, so deal with a good supplier. And, if you have not already done so, write for his catalogue without delay. You may not be able to get your favourite varieties, but the catalogue will show you what is available, and your supplier will advise you about suitable alternatives to your favourites. And use the order form he supplies: it is more easily dealt with than an order written on odd pieces of paper. Be patient with the seedsman

and don't worry him by constant reminders. He's got his troubles, too.

Don't forget to "Sprout" your Seed Potatoes



If you haven't ordered your seed potatoes, do so at once. As soon as they reach you, set them up to sprout (rose end uppermost) in shallow boxes in a cool (though frost-proof), dry shed, where they can get plenty of light and produce the short, sturdy shoots that make for earliness and high yield. Don't let them get even slightly chilled, for that's enough to kill the "eyes".



USE THIS!

Have you got your NATIONAL GROWMORE FERTILISER ?

You will need it for dressing your land before sowing and planting. It contains the three essential plant foods in balanced proportions, and 42lb. is enough for 300 square yards. The January "Guide" explained how it should be used.

OTHER REMINDERS

Finally, see that your tools are in good condition for use. When you

start outdoors you will need a line for straightness and pegs to mark the rows. And you would find a 6-ft. rod, marked off in 6 in. and 3 in. sections, very useful.

And continue to have a look at your stored crops to see that there is no damage or decay. Rub off any potato sprouts on your eating crop in store. Lift any outdoor parsnips to check growth, storing them under protection at the north side of a fence or wall, if you can.

CROP ROTATION *is most important*

Some gardening beginners have no doubt been puzzled by the term "crop rotation." It sounds a bit mysterious, but it is really quite simple. And it is the only sound basis for vegetable growing. To be a successful gardener you must be methodical. What does "crop rotation" mean? Simply arranging your cropping in such a way as to avoid growing the same kinds of crops on any section of your plot one year after another. To grow the same crop on the same ground year after year is bad gardening for several reasons. There is also the risk that diseases and pests will be increased in the soil to attack again the following year. Rotation of vegetable crops affects the condition of your land in four important ways.

★ It ensures that every part of your plot carries, at regular

intervals, crops that require thorough soil cultivation.

★ It helps to maintain the content of plant food and humus in all parts of the plot. Some crops will repay for heavier dressings of fertilisers than others, and some will get what farmyard manure or compost is available.

★ It helps to control weeds, for different crops need different cultivations at different seasons; though weeds may withstand the appropriate cultivations for one crop, they may be kept down by the cultivations for another crop.

★ It helps to control pests and diseases.

The Ministry of Agriculture recommends a three-year "crop rotation" for a 300 sq. yd. plot, and its official cropping plan, which is free for the asking, has

enjoyed a wide circulation. It was not intended that gardeners should follow it slavishly, for what suits one part of the country does not suit another. And people have different tastes in vegetables. The Ministry's plan aims at two important things—crop rotation and a sufficiency of vegetables throughout the year, especially in winter when so many gardens still show the scarcity of crops that results from poor planning.

The right approach for the gardener is, first to find out what vegetables grow satisfactorily in his neighbourhood, and then decide which of them he will grow, bearing in mind his family's likes and dislikes. He should then divide his plot into three equal parts. For simplicity we will call them A, B and C. On plot A he will grow the first year potatoes

and other roots—parsnips (if his family like them), carrots, beet and so on. On plot B he will grow green vegetables — all the cabbage family; and on plot C he will grow peas, beans, onions and leeks.

If farmyard manure is difficult to get (it is in most districts) and the gardener has to eke out the compost we hope he has made, he should manure each year only on the section that is to grow peas, beans, onions and leeks. So in three years the whole plot will be manured.

Now what happens to the plan the second year? He should just move his three groups round. On plot A, go the peas and beans, onions, etc.; on plot B, the potatoes and root crops and on plot C, the green vegetables.

	1 ST YEAR	2 ND YEAR	3 RD YEAR
A	POTATOES AND OTHER ROOT CROPS	PEAS BEANS ONIONS LEEKs	CABBAGES SAVOYS BRUSSELS SPROUTING BROCCOLI KALE
B	CABBAGES SAVOYS BRUSSELS SPROUTING BROCCOLI KALE	POTATOES AND OTHER ROOT CROPS	PEAS BEANS ONIONS LEEKs
C	PEAS BEANS ONIONS LEEKs	CABBAGES SAVOYS BRUSSELS SPROUTING BROCCOLI KALE	POTATOES AND OTHER ROOT CROPS

In the third year he should move them round again—on plot A, the green vegetables ; on plot B, the peas, beans, onions and leeks ; and on plot C, the potatoes and root crops. Then, in the fourth year, he will begin the rotation all over again.



By this simple system you not only ensure that the ground is kept in reasonably fertile condition all over, but it helps you to gauge how much ground you should devote to the various kinds of crops. The rotation can be worked equally well in the garden as on an allotment, but in each case space must be left somewhere



at one end (say, 6 foot wide) for the seed bed, marrow bed, compost heap and so on.

It is much easier to arrange a proper rotation when starting from scratch ; but even a garden that was worked last year could be brought into line by remembering where your crops were last season and trying to plant the appropriate vegetables this year to follow them up.

Crop rotation will help with liming, too, if your soil needs lime. It is a good idea to lime each year that part of the plot that carried potatoes and root vegetables the year before.



Now for the jobs you can do outdoors in February, if the weather is "open" and the soil workable. Don't forget to rake in a good general fertiliser, such as "National Growmore", a few days before sowing or planting.

radish seed; this will germinate quickly and mark the rows, making it possible to cultivate and weed between them before the slower germinating onions come through, when the radishes can be pulled for salad.

Autumn-sown onions should be transplanted in early March on to the prepared onion bed. Plant (see illustration) in rows 1 ft. apart with about 6 in. between plants (for large onions).

This POTATO business

Throughout the war the Ministry has been consistent in its advice that the household grower should not overdo potatoes (as many are apt to do), that he should not aim at self-sufficiency in this crop unless he has enough ground to allow him first to grow green crops—salads, summer vegetables and, above all, enough winter greens and root crops for his family. "Follow the official cropping plan" has all along been the advice given. And that plan provides for three 30 ft. rows of "earlies" and six 30 ft. rows of main crops for a 300 square yard plot. On plots half that size or less the Ministry considers it would be unwise to use any of the space for main crop potatoes, though two rows of "earlies" might be grown. The limited room in small gardens would be better used for growing green winter vegetables.

PLANTING EARLY

POTATOES If possible, all potato planters—great and small—should "sprout" their seed potatoes before planting, as advised in the previous issues of this "Guide". In any year it is a useful thing to do before planting, because it makes for a larger yield and brings the crop to maturity some weeks earlier.

If you have sprouted your seed potatoes, there is no need to be in a hurry about planting them out. Wait for favourable conditions. With unsprouted seed, however, it is important that the first sprouts, which are the most vigorous, should be formed

in the soil rather than in the bag, for this will reduce the risk of damage in handling. This means early planting. A simple way of planting is to take out shallow trenches 2 ft. apart and 4-5 in. deep on heavy soil, and about 6 in. on light land. The distance between the tubers in the row ought to be not less than 12 in. (15 in. for maincrops).

Heavier crops will be secured by using fertilisers. For gardens and allotments "National Growmore" fertiliser is most convenient. It

contains nitrogen, phosphorus and potash—the three important plant foods. The



method is to give a dressing of 1 lb. per 10 sq. yards, forked in before planting. Also sow in the drills before planting a light dressing at the rate of 1 lb. per 60 ft. Tubers should not be dusted with artificials, as the eye or sprout may be damaged.

Don't apply lime to cultivated soil in the same season in which it is proposed to crop it with potatoes.

the top of each bulb just showing above soil level. Crops are usually mature by early July and should be taken up, carefully dried and stored.

Save, for re-planting, sufficient *medium-sized* bulbs from strong,

healthy plants (mark them with a stick during the growing season).

Avoid using bulbs from plants that have made but poor growth and may show yellow and green mottled leaves which suggest virus disease.



Plant Jerusalem Artichokes

While the Ministry's plan does not suggest artichokes, your family may like them. And if you keep poultry or rabbits they will like them, too. Another good point is that you can grow artichokes in any odd corner, and they can be useful to screen a shed or the manure or compost heap. Though they can put up with rougher conditions than most vegetables, they will repay for good cultivation.

You can plant artichoke tubers in February or March in drills 6 in. deep. Set the tubers 12 in. to 15 in. apart, leaving 2 ft. 6 in. between rows. When the plants appear, hoe between them and draw the soil towards them. You cut the tall stalks down in early winter, leaving the tubers in the ground and lifting

as you need them. Keep a number of tubers for replanting to provide a supply for the following year. Though artichokes are perennial and can be left in the ground several years, it is well to lift and replant a section every year so that the land doesn't get weedy or overcrowded.



Do you grow RHUBARB?

If you do, February or March, when growth is starting, is the time to divide old roots, using a sharp spade or knife, and cutting so that each piece contains at least one or two good buds. Rhubarb likes deeply-dug and well-manured ground (use com-

post if you cannot get manure), for the plants usually have to stay put for several years.

Plant in a sunny spot about 2 ft. apart, and do not pull any of the stalks from plants divided this year.

Get ready for **“RUNNERS”**

Though you will not be sowing your “runners” until, say, mid-May, now is the time to get the ground prepared for them, if it is not already. They need good cultivation and do best when grown where the soil is trenched and dressed with a good dressing of well-rotted manure or compost. So if you have not manured the particular plot where your beans are to go, take out a trench a spit deep, work in a liberal dressing of manure or

compost into the lower spit and then replace the top spit.

Remember, when ordering your seeds, that half-a-pint of runner beans will sow a row 50 ft. long.



SOME USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

The Ministry of Agriculture has published during the war a number of free leaflets and priced publications that may be helpful to you, if you have not already had them. There are still some stocks of the “Dig for Victory” leaflets which you can get free from the Ministry at

Berri Court Hotel, St. Annes, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs. You can get the bulletins through any bookseller or direct from H.M. Stationery Office, York House, Kingsway, W.C.2., at the prices mentioned below.

Here are some topical leaflets:—

DIG FOR VICTORY LEAFLETS

- No. 1—Cropping Plan for a 10-rod plot (300 sq. yards)
- No. 23—Cropping Plan for a 5-rod plot (150 sq. yards)
- No. 2—Onions and related crops
- No. 4—Peas and Beans

- No. 7—How to make a Compost Heap
 - No. 12—Seed Potatoes
 - No. 19—How to sow Seeds
- And here are some suggestions for priced bulletins:—



“Growmore” Bulletins

- No. 1—Food from the Garden —3d. (4d.)
- No. 2—Pests and Diseases in the Vegetable Garden—4d. (5d.)
- No. 3—Preserves from the Garden—4d. (5d.)
- No. 7—Fruit from the Garden —3d. (4d.)

The prices are net; those in brackets include postage.

